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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/01/2016

TAGS: PREL MOPS MARR EUN LE KPKO UNSC FR

SUBJECT: LEBANON/UNFIL: CHIRAC TO MAKE ANNOUNCEMENT ON
FRENCH PARTICIPATION

REF: A. PARIS POINTS OF AUGUST 24 AND PREVIOUS

1B. PARIS 5608

Classified By: CDA Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

11. (U) President Chirac will go on national television at 8:00 p.m. tonight, August 24, to announce the decision taken earlier today, in his meeting with concerned cabinet ministers (PM, MFA, MOD), regarding France's participation in UNIFIL-plus.

12. (C) In an August 24 meeting of CDA with incoming MFA Middle East A/S-equivalent Jean Felix-Paganon (discussing Israeli FM Livni's August 23 visit, septel), Felix-Paganon declined to offer details on the substance of Chirac's message (the cabinet meeting was still ongoing). However, he did affirm that Chirac's decision to go public in advance of the August 25 EU Ministerial meeting undoubtedly meant that France would be offering an additional contribution of troops beyond the 200 announced earlier. He also expressed confidence that the EU would agree on adequate contributions at its August 25 ministerial meeting and that those forces would be deployed within two weeks, if not earlier. He did not venture a prediction on the dimensions of other national contributions.

13. (C) In the lead-up to today's cabinet decision, PM Dominique de Villepin suggested August 23, following his meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Livni, that France, "as the country most engaged and most present in Lebanon," wished "to go further" provided that appropriate conditions were met with respect to UNIFIL's mission, ROE's and chain of command. Chirac's Middle East advisor, Dominique Boche, told us that those French concerns had been largely resolved during meetings in Paris August 21 with DPKO U/SGY Guehenno -- apparently paving the way for the decision taken today.

15. (U) The August 24 edition of Le Monde (see Paris Points of August 24), in what appeared to be a well-sourced article, reports several key elements of the likely GOF position, in particular with respect to French concerns on ROE and command arrangements, but stops short of offering numbers.

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Rosenblatt